them in cemeteries feed the frenzy of the professional mourners; in a Kairouan mosque exacerbate the mystic rapture of the Aissaouas, I have seen them beat out the rhythm for the club dance and the sacred dances in the little mosque of Sidi-Maleck. And I was always the only Frenchman to see them. I don't know where the tourists go; I fancy the paid guides show them a trashy Africa in order to protect the Arabs, who like calm and secrecy, from intruders. For I have never met a single one of them in the neighborhood of anything interesting; nor even, and fortunately, but very rarely in the old villages of the oasis where I used to return daily until I no longer startled anyone. Yet the hotels are full of travelers, but they fall into the trap set by the quack guides and pay dearly for the falsified ceremonies tricked up for them.

There wasn't a Frenchman last year, either, at that extraordinary nocturnal celebration which I witnessed almost by chance, attracted merely by the sound of the drum and the ululation of the women. The celebration was in the Negro village: a dancing procession of women and musicians was going up the main street preceding torch-bearers and a group of laughing children who were leading by the horns a huge black he-goat covered with jewels and stuffs. He had bracelets on his horns, an enormous silver ring in his nostrils; he had necklaces around his neck; he was clothed in a piece of crimson satin. In the crowd that was following I recognized the tall Ashour; he explained to me that the ram was going to be slaughtered during the night to bring luck to the village, but first he was walked through the streets so that the evil spirits of the houses, which remain on the doorsteps, could enter into him and disappear.

Negro music! How many times, far from Africa, I have thought I

heard you and suddenly there was re-created around you the whole south. In Rome for instance, Via Gregoriana, when the heavy wagons, going down in the very early morning, used to wake me. Their dull bounces on the paving blocks would deceive me a moment in my half* sleep and then leave me distressed for some time afterward.

We heard the Negro music this morning, but it was not for an ordinary celebration. They were playing in the inner courtyard of a private house, and the men at the entrance wanted at first to keep us out until some Arabs recognized me and protected our entrance. I was amazed at first by the large number of Jewish women gathered there, all very beautiful and richly dressed. The courtyard was full; there barely remained place enough in the middle for the dance. The dust and heat were stifling. A great ray of sunlight fell from the upper opening, whence, as from a balcony, were leaning clusters of children.

The staircase rising to the terrace was also covered with people, all attentive, as we too immediately became; what they were watching was terrible. In the center of the courtyard a large copper basin full of water.